

that faith-based organizations can compete on more equal footing than in the past. The government will not be encouraging any kind of discrimination but, instead, will be able to partner with faith-based organizations in a wider variety of social services, including juvenile justice, crime prevention, housing assistance, job training, elder care, hunger relief, domestic violence prevention, and others.

In summary, we should all support H.R. 7 because it provides a proven method for the federal government to participate in the provision of social services to Americans who still need help. This bill allows the federal government to partner with faith-based and other community service organizations that already have a history of success in providing these social services. H.R. 7 puts faith-based organizations on a level playing field in the competition for federal funds, without jeopardizing their autonomy, and without undermining religious freedom for either the service providers or for the service beneficiaries. I urge all of my colleagues to vote for H.R. 7.

Mr. HYDE. Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to this debate with great attention all afternoon, and—at the risk of oversimplifying, I would like to cut to the chase. What we are talking about is an army of people out there motivated by spiritual impulses who want to do good, who want to help solve poverty, disease, violence in the community, homelessness, hunger, and some of them are clergy, some of them are not. They are religiously motivated, and we have spent all afternoon finding ways to keep them out. We have enough help. We don't need them—there is too much God out there. We suffer from an excess of God, for some crazy reason.

Discrimination—if the First Baptist Church wants to do something as the First Baptist Church, take care of some homeless people, that fact that they want to retain their identity and not become another local United Fund operation, there is nothing wrong with that. There is nothing wrong with saying if you want to join us, you have to be Baptist.

There is discrimination, and there is invidious discrimination. I do not think it is discrimination for Baptists to want to hire Baptists to do something as the Baptist Church. I think that is fine. That is not invidious discrimination. So far as I am concerned, we ought to figure out ways to facilitate the exploitation, the benign exploitation of these wonderful people who want to help us with our very human problems, instead of finding ways to say on because, for fear, God might sneak in under the door.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, as with many of the colleagues from both sides of the aisle, I strongly support the community services provided by religious organizations throughout the Nation. We are all proud of the faith we hold and believe in the principles of selfless service encouraged by religious organizations. As I have personally witnessed in western Wisconsin, the effective and invaluable efforts put forth by religious organizations to combat such traumas as drug-addiction, and child and domestic abuse, are worthy of our continual appreciation and praise.

I am, however, concerned that this legislation would undermine the successes and integrity of such programs through the introduction of more government. I am therefore unable to support this flawed legislation which, while it may be well intentioned, seeks to pro-

vide funds to religious organizations by violating our constitution and without regard to State's rights.

The establishment of religion clause in the first amendment to the constitution was drafted in the recognition that state activity must be separate from church activity if people are to be free from Government interference. The Founders did not intend this provision as anti-religious, but instead realized this is the way to protect religion while simultaneously protecting the people's rights to worship freely.

America was founded by people seeking freedom from religious persecution by fleeing lands that contained religious strife and even warfare. To infringe on the separation of church and state is to infringe on the miracle and fundamental principles of American democracy. It is this principle that not only allows our government to operate by the will of the people, but also allows religious entities to conduct themselves without Government regulation and intrusion. When the line between church and state is an issue in policy, the highest scrutiny must be applied to ensure that principle prevails. I do not believe this legislation would pass such constitutional scrutiny.

The Founders also recognized the dangers of State sponsored favoritism toward any religion. This bill will not only pit secular agencies against religious organizations, it will pit religion against religion for the competition of limited public funds.

Under current law, there are Federal tax incentives for individuals to donate to charitable organizations, including the religious organizations of their choice. In addition, religious groups have always had the ability to apply and receive federal funding for the purpose of providing welfare related programs and services after they form 501(c)(3) organizations. Entities including Catholic Charities and Lutheran Social Service have a long history of participation in publicly funded social service programs.

The conditions associated with the provision of these services, however, require the religious organizations to be secular in nature—in accordance with the establishment of religion clause in the first amendment to the Constitution, as well as adhere to federal, state or local civil rights laws. H.R. 7 would remove these preconditions, allowing for public funding to go toward discriminatory and exclusionary practices that violate the intentions of hard fought civil rights.

In addition to the constitutionality of the legislation, we must also question how the provisions contained in the bill would be implemented and enforced. Supporters of H.R. 7 claim the bill contains safeguards that would prohibit public funding from going to proselytization and other strictly religious activities. Even if these safeguards existed, which they do not, how do we police these organizations to ensure compliance? If we find violations do we then fine the churches or prosecute Catholic priests, Methodist ministers or Lutheran pastors?

The road we are taking with this legislation leads to these serious questions about regulations imposed on organizations that receive Federal funds. The strings attached to entities receiving federal funds are there to ensure applicable laws are obeyed and accountability exists. It is precisely these types of provisions that will inhibit religious organizations from

maintaining their character, and it would be negligent of us as public servants to waive these provisions. This situation serves to illustrate why this bill should be opposed.

The substitute to this bill, offered by Mr. RANGEL, guards against the possibility of publicly funded discrimination by not overriding State and local civil rights laws, as well as offsetting the costs associated with this legislation. In addition to being unconditional, H.R. 7 is indeed expensive. While it is not as expensive as the President had originally envisioned, it will cost over \$13 billion with no offsets. With passage of the President's tax cut, there is simply no money to pay for this bill without taking from the Medicare and Social Security Trust funds. A problem that will not go away as we mark up the rest of next year's budget.

With all the problems associated with this bill, I ask my colleagues to vote against H.R. 7, and support the Rangel substitute.

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 7, the Community Solutions Act. While the goals of this bill are noble, there are fundamental concerns with this legislation.

One of the central tenets of most faith based organizations, whether they are Catholic, Protestant, Jewish or Muslim, is to reach out to those in need.

I know that in churches in which I've been a member and churches in my district have several programs to serve the needy, such as food drives, senior nutrition programs, housing assistance, substance abuse counseling, after school programs and many other needed community services.

These are services that most churches perform because they are consistent with that church's mission.

A component of H.R. 7, the Community Solutions Act would expand Charitable Choice to allow faith based organizations to compete for federal funding for many of these services. The religious groups today compete and receive federal funding.

But they cannot only serve their particular faith or beliefs.

In fact, there are organizations such as the Baptist Joint Committee, the United Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church, and the United Jewish Communities Federation all fear that this legislation would interfere with their missions, rather than help them.

We know that the first amendment prevents Congress from establishing a religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. This wall of separation has been a fundamental principle since the founding of our great nation.

As a Christian I believe it is my duty to serve and my service is a reflection of my faith. Many Christians, Jewish and Muslims, do this everyday if we are practicing our beliefs.

We do not need Federal tax dollars to practice and live our faith.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I stand with you today to raise my grave concerns regarding H.R. 7.

Faith-based and community-based organizations have always been at the forefront of combating the hardships facing families and communities. As a federal legislator, I do not have a problem with government finding ways to harness the power of faith-based organizations and their vital services.

Although I support faith-based entities, I cannot endorse H.R. 7 because I believe that: